

Gadsby's Tavern

Waterman was also responsible for the re-creation of Gadsby's Tavern Ballroom, 138 North Royal Street. The original woodwork including two mantelpieces, cornices and wainscoting from the first floor and the original ballroom on the second floor including two door frames, two mantelpieces, the musicians gallery, wainscot and cornice had been removed from the building in May of 1917 and reinstalled at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.⁷¹ Waterman went to New York and took measurements of the woodwork at the Metropolitan and recreated the ballroom in Alexandria in 1936.⁷² In 1936 along with Delos Smith, another HABS architect living in Alexandria, he restored the first-floor facade of Gadsby's and designed a compatible doorway to replace the original which had also been removed to the Metropolitan. This work included the removal of inappropriate 1878 storefront windows. The new doorway was only meant to mimic an eighteenth-century door and did not pretend to re-create the original. That would come later. In addition, Waterman was also responsible for the restoration of the stairs and the initial work on the second floor lodging rooms of the City Hotel building.⁷³ His knowledge of and work dealing with the historic architecture was summarized in his article "The Architecture of Alexandria, Virginia" that appeared in the February 1945 issue of Antiques (v.47, no.2).

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⁷¹ Kabler, "Restoration of Gadsby's Wins Civic Support".

⁷² Thomas Tileston Waterman, "Gadsby's Tavern Ballroom" in Early American Rooms, Russell Hawes Kettell, ed. (Portland, Maine; Southworth-Anthoensen Press, 1936), pp. 127-30. See also, Gadsby's Tavern, HABS No. VA-100, Thomas T. Waterman, author, 5/6/41.

⁷³ For the restoration of the first windows see, Building Permit #1712, 6/9/1936. City of Alexandria Code Enforcement Bureau files.

WILLIAM RAMSAY -- "The Romulus of Alexandria"
by T. Michael Miller

William Ramsay was one of Alexandria's early founders, and an outstanding business and political leader during the 18th century. Born in Kirkcubright in the Galloway district of Scotland in 1716, he immigrated to Virginia around 1742 where he "became interested in the trade of the upper Potomac as early as 1744."

On July 13, 1749, during the first sale of town lots, Ramsay purchased parcels 46 and 47 which were situated on the northeast corner of King and Fairfax Streets and extended east to the Potomac River. Here Ramsay resided, conducted business, and maintained a wharf. There was also a smokehouse and kitchen on the lot.

Shipping merchant Ramsay engaged in business with John Dixon until 1757 when the partnership was dissolved and Dixon returned to Whitehaven, England.

As a town trustee Ramsay held numerous positions of civic responsibility including in 1754 adjuster of weights and seals with fellow merchant and business partner John Carlyle. Furthermore, Ramsay was a member of the Committee of Safety, superintended the completion of the Fairfax County Courthouse, was the town's first postmaster in 1772, served as colonel of the militia regiment, and for many years sat as a Fairfax County Justice of the Peace.

William Ramsay married Ann McCarty, the daughter of Dennis McCarty, Sr. and Sarah Ball. The couple were the parents of eight children including a son Dennis who was elected mayor of Alexandria in 1789 and 1793.

In 1761, William Ramsay was so admired that his fellow citizens elected him the town's only honorary Lord Mayor. The enthusiastic inhabitants decorated him with a golden chain bearing a medal. "Upon one side was represented the infant state of Alexandria and its commodious harbour..." After the mock election and investment were over:

"the Lord Mayor and Common Council, preceded by officers of State, Sword and Mace bearers and accompanied by many gentlemen of the town and country, wearing blue sashes under crosses, made a grand procession...with drums, trumpets and a band of music, colors flying." The shipping in the harbor displayed flags and banners while guns fired during the afternoon. A very elegant entertainment was prepared at the Coffee House, where the new Lord Mayor and his entourage sat down to a sumptuous repast. This was followed by a ball given by the Scotch gentlemen at which a numerous and brilliant company of ladies danced. The ceremonies ended with fireworks,

bonfires, and other demonstrations." [Maryland Gazette June 22, 1762] William Ramsay died on 10 February 1785 and was interred in Christ Church Cemetery, North Washington Street.



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